

Statement from Congressman Ron Kind
Supporting H.R. 1433, the District of Columbia House Voting Rights Act of 2007
March 22, 2007

Madam Speaker, I rise today to provide my strong support for H.R.1433, The District of Columbia House Voting Rights Act of 2007. Ensuring that all citizens have the opportunity to participate in our democratic process is a responsibility I take very seriously, and H.R. 1433 would achieve this important objective.

We take pride as a nation for the numerous freedoms extended to our citizens; however, the United States is the only federal democracy in the world today that deprives the residents of its capital full voting representation in the legislature. For the past 200 years, District of Columbia residents have fulfilled their responsibility as citizens in countless ways, such as serving in the military, paying federal taxes and serving on juries. We have an obligation today to fulfill the intention of the framers of the United States Constitution by providing voting representation for all citizens of this country.

Opponents of this bill will argue that the framers of the Constitution never intended for the citizens of the District to have a voice in the halls of Congress. I doubt, however, that anyone at that time could have imagined that 550,000 people would one day inhabit the farm lands that covered the landscape of Washington, D.C. in 1790. In fact, the citizens of the city of Arlington were so outraged by their disenfranchisement that they seceded from the District and returned to the Commonwealth of Virginia over 150 years ago.

Additionally, opponents argue that this change in law will likely result in a legal challenge, and that it therefore is waste of time. I welcome that debate. If this legislation has to travel to the Supreme Court so that over a half million citizens of the United States can be represented in their government, I believe that is democracy at work.

In a country as great as ours, it is intolerable that there are citizens today who are still subject to “taxation without representation.” With eighty-two percent of our nation’s citizens in support of expanding this fundamental right to all citizens, the time is now to correct this injustice and restore democracy in our nation’s capital.

Madam Speaker, I urge my colleagues to capitalize on this opportunity to extend to District residents an entitlement cherished so deeply by citizens of the United States – the right to vote. I yield back the balance of my time.